

SITUATION REPORT NO. 3

INCIDENT NO. 2004-014

DATE: February 18, 2004 Time: 5:00 p.m.

TO: Governor John Hoeven
State Capitol
Bismarck ND 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Severe Winter Weather – Excessive snow and high winds are creating drifts up to 20 feet, impeding snow removal efforts throughout the state. County emergency managers have reported township and county snow removal resources are not sufficient to move snow in a timely matter.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: No change from previous reports.
3. DAMAGES: Forecasts by the National Weather Service (NWS) indicate the slow snowmelt that started February 14 will continue into the last week of February. The forecast for the next seven days calls for daytime highs of 30 to 35 for the northern portion of the state and 35 to 40 for the south. The warmer temperatures are causing the snow to compact and crust, decreasing the depths of snow and reducing the chance for blowing and drifting. However, the heaviest snowfall typically occurs in March. The NWS forecast for March, April and May calls for below normal temperatures over most of North Dakota with a higher chance of below normal temperatures over the western third. Storms that may occur during this time frame will probably produce snow rather than rain. Precipitation is expected to be near normal.

The warmer temperatures have enhanced snow removal efforts throughout the state. Reports from local officials indicate that they have been keeping up with snow removal efforts. However, they are concerned about exceeding the budgeted costs for these efforts. Counties that have issued snow emergency declarations to date include: Burke, Divide, Golden Valley, McKenzie, McHenry, McLean, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville, Ward and Williams.

Counties throughout the state provided the following reports to the State Operations Center (SOC) based on actions taken last week in response to the blizzard that occurred on February 11 and 12.

BARNES: All schools and the Barnes County Courthouse were closed due to blizzard conditions on February 11. Plows were out all day on February 11 in an effort to keep main roads clear. I-94 and the main county roads were passable but the township roads were in fair to poor shape and were scheduled to be plowed on February 12. All emergency access routes have

been cleared. Current conditions have stabilized and snow removal operations are continuing without any further problems.

BURLEIGH: Blizzard conditions on February 11 and 12 resulted in numerous drifts on roadways. As visibility conditions improved on Wednesday, February 11, county plows in the Bismarck vicinity went out at 1:00 p.m. and plowed until 6:00 p.m. All 19 plow units began plowing countywide at 6:00 a.m., February 12. Roads were drifted in spots but traffic was able to get through. All emergency access routes have been cleared. Current conditions have stabilized and snow removal operations are continuing without any further problems.

DIVIDE : County officials reported on February 17 that efforts continue to remove snow from county and township roads from the blizzard that occurred on February 11 and 12. Emergency funds have already been exceeded due to costs associated with overtime and additionally leased equipment needed for the snow removal efforts. Roads are still drifting in some areas of the county while other roads are still completely blocked.

MCHENRY: The NWS reported up to 51 inches of snow had fallen in the county from October through February 1. With the combination of winds and snow, county and township roads had become hazardous, and some are impassable. All schools were closed on February 11 and reopened on February 12. Some buses were not running due to snowdrifts. The county snowplows were pulled off the roads for a period of time on February 11 due to snow and drifting. Additional help had been hired to assist with snow removal in hard-hit areas. Many area farmers and ranchers were using their own equipment, as well. County snow plows are still at work removing snow from primary county roads. Additional resources have been hired for snow removal for other county and township roads. Snow removal is proceeding without any further problems. Some areas are still encountering drifting, and hazardous icy driving conditions.

PIERCE: Local officials continue to report blocked public roadways as of February 17. Excessive wear and tear on snow removal equipment, coupled with exhausted county resources, has caused an excessive burden on available county funds.

THREE AFFILIATED TRIBES: The Fort Berthold Reservation has received 46.8 inches of snow, according to the NWS. There is a minimum of 18 to 24 inches of snow in open fields. Snow drifts range from six to eight feet high in sheltered areas. During last week's snow storm, schools were closed along with other community activities. A "no travel advisory" was issued for Highways 22, 23, 37 and 1804 along with Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) roads within the reservation boundaries. Area ranchers are still not able to access pastures to feed livestock. Deer populations are destroying the hay supplies and local vegetation. Tribal Roads Department has indicated that heavy equipment repairs, fuel costs and overtime hours have climbed daily since the heavy snowfall.

WARD: As a result of severe storm activity on February 10-12, officials for the county highway department, local public works departments and several incorporated cities and townships indicated considerably above-average use of budgeted personnel hours and overtime for snow removal and maintenance of emergency routes. In addition, road conditions and bitterly cold temperatures have made travel extremely hazardous. Law enforcement officials, with assistance from fire services, checked over 90 vehicles in ditches throughout the county. On February 11, a woman was rescued from her car after being stuck for nearly eight hours off Ward County Road 18 SE of Minot.

WILLIAMS: The emergency manager reported that all of the county roads are open, some limited to one lane. The county has started working on the township roads with the assistance of contractors and township maintainers. All schools are open but some of the bus routes are still not open. The city of Alamo has declared a snow emergency.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: No change from previous reports.

STATE: No change from previous reports.

FEDERAL: No change from previous reports.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: No change from previous reports.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: No change from previous reports.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: No change from previous reports.

8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from previous reports.

9. OTHER INFORMATION: The N.D. Division of Emergency Management's Situation Reports are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director